



NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF MIDDAY MEAL IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF KAMRUP METRO URBAN DISTRICT, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Mid-Day Meal is a Centrally Sponsored Programme launched with the objective to boost “universalisation of primary education” by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impacting on nutrition of children in primary level. This study focuses on the Nutritional Status of the Midday meal provided to primary Schools in Kamrup Metro Urban District, Assam. The survey method has been adopted in the proposed investigation. The data were gathered with the help of Questionnaire, Interview and participant-Observation technique. For secondary data, recent government and non-government reports on primary education, government websites, newspaper articles and journals were used. For primary data, random sample were taken from 50 primary schools of Kamrup Metro Urban District, Assam. The findings of the study were that midday meal for class I-V is free for all the schools and from class VI-VIII, 89% schools are taking contribution from students whereas 11% schools not taking contribution from students. It also suggested for proper utilization of this programme by the stake holders, the Government should make proper rules and regulations, and also the parents to be aware and concerned about this programme and teachers should maintain the above condition properly for sustainable education development.

KEY WORDS: Nutrition, Mid-day meal, primary education, Kamrup Metro Urban District, Assam.

INTRODUCTION:

Mid-Day Meal Programme in India was launched as the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, a Centrally sponsored Scheme on 15th August, 1995 with the objective to boost “universalisation of primary education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impacting on nutrition of students in primary classes”. The scheme was implemented in 2408 blocks in the first year, and covered the whole country in a phased manner during 1997-98. The programme originally covered children of primary stage (Class I-V) in government, local body and government aided schools and was extended in October, 2002, to cover children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres also. Central Assistance under the scheme consisted of free supply of food grains @ 100 grams per child per school day, and subsidy for transportation of food grains up to a maximum of Rs.50 per quintal. The MDM Programme was further revised in 2004 and 2006 with the objectives given below:-

- Improving the nutritional status of children in class I-V in government, local body and government aided schools and EGS and AIE centres;
- Encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend schools more regularly and help them concentrate on class room activities; and
- Providing nutritional support to children of primary stage in drought affected areas during summer vacation. (SCERT, Chhattisgarh, 2014)

In September 2004 the scheme was revised to provide cooked mid day meal with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein to all children studying in classes I-V in Government and aided schools and EGS/AIE centers. As per direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court cooked meal at noon time is being provided to all students of all the Govt./Govt. Aided Primary Schools, EGS & AIE Centers w.e.f 01.09.2004. Each midday meal should contain 464 K calorie and 14.2 gms. of Protein in case of Classes I-V and 681 K. calorie and 19.8 gms. of Protein in case of Class VI-VIII.

The government of India allocates food grains (rice) as per the list of students submitted by the State Govt. The State Govt. reallocates the rice in favour of the districts. The respective collectors lift the rice through the Storing and Transporting agents appointed by them through tender procedure from the nearest FCI Godown. The Block transporting agents carry the rice to the school point from the Godown. The WSHG/Teachers –in- charge of MDM receive the rice at the school level. This process has been streamlined and is also given in time. The collectors have been instructed to take care of proper storage of food grains.

Entitlement norm per child per day under MDM:

Item	Primary (class I-V)	Upper primary (class VI-VIII)
Calories	450	700
Protein (in grams)	12	20
Rice / wheat (in grams)	100	150
Dal (in grams)	20	30
Vegetables (in grams)	50	75
Oil and fat (in grams)	5	7.5

Source: Midday meal-Wikipedia, 2017

Midday Meal Scheme in Assam:

In Assam, Cooked Mid-day Meal Programme started with effect from January, 2005. The Assam Government had engaged 60,000 midday meal cooks and helpers in 30,000 lower primary (LP) schools in 2004. The midday meal cooks and helpers were selected by school managing committees and the school headmasters concerned. At present, a midday meal cook gets Rs 40 to Rs. 50 per month in the State. The All Assam LP School Midday Meal Cooks' and Helpers' Association were demanding for implementation of the Centre's November 24, 2009 notification that the midday meal cooks should be given a monthly wage of Rs 1,000 each.

More than a 100 children from a school in Assam were hospitalized after eating the meal provided under government's midday meal scheme with the condition of at least 10 students reported to be serious. 260 students at the Barbrah Tea Estate LP School started to complain of problems soon after eating the food with over 120 students collapsing before being rushed to the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) following complaints of headache and vomiting.

Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam (2010) the programme originally covered children of Govt. and provincialised Primary Schools in Assam and has been extended to cover Govt. aided schools, EGS and AIE centers. Mallik (2008) found that the quality of dal supplied under the scheme is being tested by the mothers of student. The mothers are coming in turn to oversee the programme at the time of cooking and distribution of meals in school. Manpreet Kaur (2016) studied that the dropout rate in primary education schools fell on an average by 0.61 percent (1960-61 to 2000-01) and in the after period (2000-01 to 2013-14), the dropout rate fell on an average by 0.66 percent. Molla and Sheikh (2015) found that the Midday Meal programme helped to increase the school attendance children in primary level. So, it may be mention that the quantity of the school attendance children in primary level is increases but quality of the students falling down due to lack of management of this concerned programme. Nutan and Preja (2014) found that the consumption of mid day meals the nutritional status of the rural school going girls under study was lower than the recommended Indian levels. Deodhar and et al (2010) found that one option is to engage private agencies which would be expected to follow certain hygiene norms for food prep-

aration. Food inspectors may be deployed to periodically check quality of prepared meals. Uma (2013) found that the quality of education was absent as children were being passed to next class every year. The achievements of midday meal programs were being measured quantity wise rather than quality wise.

OBJECTIVE:

To find out the Nutritional Status of the Midday meal provided in Primary Schools of Kamrup Metro Urban District, Assam.

METHODOLOGY:

The survey method was adopted in the proposed investigation. The data were gathered with the help of Questionnaire prepared for the purpose. In addition to this, Interview and participant-Observation technique was used. For secondary data, recent government and nongovernment reports on primary education, government websites, newspaper articles and journals were relied upon. For primary data, random sample were taken from 50 primary schools of Kamrup metro urban, Assam.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

Table No.1.
(Percentage of Schools providing food items as per MDM Norm)

Class-wise	Food items									
	Rice		Protein		Dal		Vegetables		Oil & fat	
	Norm (%)	Not Norm (%)	Norm (%)	Not Norm (%)	Norm (%)	Not Norm (%)	Norm (%)	Not Norm (%)	Norm (%)	Not Norm (%)
I-V	20.7	79.3	9.4	90.6	24.5	75.5	15	85	5.5	94.5
VI-VIII	27.3	72.7	15.3	84.7	21.7	78.3	32.5	67.5	10.6	89.4

The Table No.1 shows percentage of sampled schools found providing Rice, Protein, Dal, Vegetables and Oil & Fat to class I-V children as per MDM Norm are 20.7%, 9.4%, 24.5%, 15% and 5.5% respectively, whereas 79.3%, 90.6%, 75.5%, 85% and 94.5% of the sampled schools were found providing these food items respectively below MDM Norm to Class I-V children.

The Table No.1 also shows percentage of sampled schools found providing Rice, Protein, Dal, Vegetables and Oil & Fat to class VI-VIII children as per MDM Norm are 27.3%, 15.3%, 21.7%, 32.5% and 10.6% respectively, whereas 72.7%, 84.7%, 78.3%, 67.5% and 89.4% of the sampled schools were found providing these food items respectively below MDM Norm to Class VI-VIII students.

None of the sampled schools were found to provide fruits of any type to children of Class I-VIII.

Table No.2

Class-wise	Status	%
I-V	Free	100
VI-VIII	Contribution from students	89
	No Contribution from students	11

Table 2 shows that the status of midday meal from class I-V is free; and for class VI-VIII, 89% schools are taking contribution from students for MDM whereas 11% schools are found not taking contribution from students.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The teachers must be present during midday meal time with students.
- Often recess time is not enough for the teachers; they should be present while serving food and have their own lunch as well. Therefore, mealtime for students, though taking place at the cost of study-time meant for student-teacher engagement.
- It must be noted that the mandated midday meals are supposed to provide only a minimum of 700 calories out of the total requirement of about 2000 calories per day. Thus, at best, a massive MDM exercise may contribute the required nutrients in sufficient quantities, about a third of the daily requirement of a child.
- Therefore, efficacy of the nutrition delivery could be supplemented by offering fortified packaged foods. Such initiatives have been taken-up in other developing countries. For example, at the behest of Ministry of Health, triple fortified (Iodine, Iron, Vitamin A) noodle-seasonings and soya sauce have been commercially introduced in Thailand and China. Other fortified foods such as fortified sugar, milk and edible oil have been launched in Latin American countries (IE, 2010).

- Nutritional bar twice a week and a seasonal fruit (usually banana is the cheapest) once a week will bring variety to the menu. In addition, this will provide convenience both to children and the authorities in serving the food and they could focus more attention to studies. And, in doing so, one would also ensure that hygienically packed (a banana has a natural hygienic packing) and nutritious food is delivered and consumed by the students.
- While packaged fortified bar and fruit can complement the regular meal, nutritional quality of the cooked, warm meal itself can also be improved. Better storage and quicker turnover of food grains from FCI godowns may provide better grain quality in terms of safety and nutrition.
- MDM scheme does mention established quality checks. While food inspectors can be employed to check quality of existing meals, policy makers may give a serious consideration to introducing package food. Moreover, looking into future, there is a distinct possibility of introduction of genetically modified (GM) foods in the market.
- Golden rice is naturally fortified in terms of nutrients such as beta-carotene. Use of such rice in MDM scheme may improve nutritional delivery to the targeted children.
- Attention of the State Government is also drawn here to uplift the status of the cooks by meeting their meagre demand and to improve quality of their services. Moreover, proper care should be taken to maintain hygiene while preparing and serving the Midday meal.
- This type of study may be undertaken with more variable like effect of Mid Day meal on elementary school level that will surely change the attitude of the teacher and guardian in the positive manner.

CONCLUSION:

After going through this study, it has been concluded that the Midday Meal programme helped to increase the school attendance of children in primary level. So, it may be mentioned that the quantity of the school attendance of children in primary level increases but the decrease in quality of the students is due to lack of proper management of this concerned programme. For, suitable utilization of this programme, Government should make proper rules and regulations, and also all the parents must be aware and concerned about this programme and teachers should maintain the above condition properly for sustainable development of education.

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